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personal touch

FILLED WITH A VARIETY OF TRAVEL KEEPSAKES AND FAMILY MEMENTOS, A COUPLE'S AUSTIN HOME PROVIDES THE PERFECT SANCTUARY WITH ITS COMFORTABLE FURNISHINGS AND WARM PALETTE.

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ARCHITECTURE Gregory Brooks and Patrice Mailloux-Huberdeau, BMH Design Studio
HOME BUILDER Michael J. Smeets, MJS Design + Build
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE José Roberto Corea, Austin Outdoor Design
BEDROOMS 3 | BATHROOMS 3 | SQUARE FEET 4,200



The light-filled living room of this Austin home conceived by designer Mark Cravotta is infused with rich colors like those in the antique rug purchased at Black Sheep Unique and a commissioned abstract by Austin-based artist Roi James. A custom coffee table from Cravotta Interiors adds interest.



While searching for a new place to call home, an Austin couple was drawn to a contemporary house in the city's vibrant Zilker district. "The neighborhood has this wonderful energy," the wife says. "It has fantastic music festivals and magnificent mountain biking and hiking trails, and we love being near great restaurants." Just steps from the action, the house itself offers a calm escape for the two busy executives. "There's a great feeling of openness and space," the husband says. "It's got a contemporary feel yet it's also comfortable. When we walked up to the rooftop terrace and saw the downtown skyline views, we were pretty much sold."

Living room seating includes a pair of chairs by Usona in Philadelphia, which are covered in a lively Zoffany chenille cloth from Culp Associates. The wooden floor lamp by Blu Dot coordinates with shelves housing the owners' collection of books, art and beautiful objects.

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Designer Mark Cravotta's job was to add some flavor to the existing residence. "My inspiration came from residential designer Gregory Brooks' beautifully designed house, and the clients' desire to finally have a home that reflected their personalities," Cravotta says. The dwelling's primary materials—including Douglas fir and concrete—provided a strong backdrop for the designer's chosen palette. "We chose the wall colors first," Cravotta says. "In the living room, it's a soft, luminous green. We then looked at several fabric combinations. And the greens won again." A fantastic 120-year-old Sultanabad rug and a richly colored piece by artist Roi James above the fireplace add to the welcoming ambience.

The couple wanted to maintain the home's fresh, modern feel while weaving in traditional elements for warmth and authenticity. Cravotta shopped the souks of Marrakesh, for example, to find the perfect combination of rugs to be hung as tapestries. The abode also showcases many treasures from the couple's own travels. "We have fabulous antique Asian figurines in our dining room," the wife says. "And Mark did a lovely job of helping us fill the home with photos of our travels. They remind us of our dreams that have come true."



Sleek but comfortable, the living room's Effingham sofa from Dessin Fournir is covered in mohair by Myung Jin from David Sutherland. In the background, a stylish custom piece by Cravotta Interiors is made of walnut and steel and doubles as a desk.



Like a peninsula jutting out from the house, the dining room was designed to be an indoor-outdoor space. Elements like Douglas fir paneling and a pair of iron chandeliers from Alexander Marchant give the room a sophisticated camp-style feel. The rolling dining table and chairs are all from AKMD in Chicago. A carpet from Kaskas Oriental Rugs lies underfoot.



Above: The well-equipped kitchen includes Douglas fir cabinetry and concrete countertops. The sleek barstools are from Design Within Reach. Left: The open shelves on either side of the stainless-steel stove bring an airy quality to the hard-working space.



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The homeowners discovered that even a small change could have a big impact. “When we purchased the home, the master bedroom was oriented at a quarter-turn in the other direction,” the wife says. “So it was a bit tight, and you didn’t have this amazing view out the balcony. Just that one-quarter turn transformed the space into a magical cocoon.” Adds the husband, “We open our drapes in the morning, and we’re looking out at the sunrise from the third-floor balcony above the trees and the city. It’s a really special feeling.” The master bath was also refreshed. “We opened up part of the ceiling to install an operable skylight over the shower,” says builder Michael J. Smeets.



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In addition, Brooks and fellow residential designer Patrice Mailloux-Huberdeau transformed the sparse backyard into a peaceful outdoor sanctuary that connects visually with the home's indoor spaces. The yard's majestic live oaks were used to organize the area. "We composed a backyard with a swimming pool in the only place that wouldn't destroy the trees," Brooks says. The duo also designed lighting to extend one's eyes from the house into the garden as well as an ingenious automatic awning over the pool to keep the space breezy. "It made the pool a complete getaway for us," the wife says. Brooks and Mailloux-Huberdeau also fashioned fun resting spots. "We created a sitting area between the pool and the deck with a fire pit and furniture around it," Brooks says. Adds landscape designer José Roberto Corea, "We brought in Indonesian

The inviting third-floor master suite includes a private lounge for relaxing and watching television. Camerich's ultra-comfy Cloud sectional from Lytle Pressley Contemporary rests on a vintage rug from Black Sheep Unique. Tables by Draenert, purchased at Scott+Cooner, balance a Minotti swivel chair.



The wife's office affords views to the outdoors; draperies made with a textile from Quadrielle frame the scene. A leather chair pulls up to a stylish Hickory Chair desk purchased at Stockton Hicks Laffey. Visual Comfort's table lamp provides light while a vintage rug from Black Sheep Unique grounds the space.



A large skylight helps to create a light-filled, spa-like environment in the master bathroom. Floating cabinets, designed by Cravotta, feature honed white Caesarstone countertops. The original wood floors were replaced with honed Botticino marble for a sleek look. A stool from Roost provides a pretty perch in the vanity area.



For the master bedroom, Cravotta custom-designed an integral wall unit with shelving, a bed and built-in nightstands to house the couple's books and beloved treasures. The unit is made of white oak with a warm gray stain and darkened natural steel. The headboard is upholstered in Donghia's charcoal mohair velvet.

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beach pebbles to create a very stark physical separation between the house and the pool deck. And, we used two different types of bamboo to form these great backdrops for privacy, which also give you a sense of nature as the wind blows and the bamboo leaves rustle.”

With just a few alterations, the couple say they now love—and use—every part of their home. “If you were to come to our house, you would immediately have a sense of who we are,” the wife says. “You would see that we love spending time in our house cooking, relaxing and swimming. A home should be a place that engages and inspires you, and reconnects you to the things that give you purpose and joy.” **L**